Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL)
Newsletter # 3, Dec. 2010

The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties supports the Department of Homeland Security as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.

New Website Launched

CRCL's revamped website provides detailed information about the Office and its priorities. It improves public access to information about the Office, including our reports, policies, complaints procedures, data on both employment and general civil rights complaints filed, and much more. Please visit www.dhs.gov/crcl.

Of course the website remains a work in progress; if you have requests or ideas, let us know: email crcloutreach@dhs.gov.

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CRCL Submits Annual Report to Congress

CRCL has just submitted its FY 2009 Annual Report to Congress in accordance with 6 U.S.C. § 345 and 42 U.S.C § 2000ee-1. The Report highlights CRCL's activities in FY 2009 to further the protection of civil rights and civil liberties, from expanding training of government partners to improving civil rights and civil liberties oversight within the Department and strengthening Departmental coordination in furtherance of Secretary Napolitano's goal of a fully integrated "One DHS." Click here to read the Report.

ICC Submits Annual Report to the President

Pursuant to Executive Order 13347, *Individuals with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness*, the Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities (ICC)—which CRCL staffs, and the CRCL Officer chairs—recently submitted its annual report to the President. The ICC helps to integrate the needs and expertise of individuals with disabilities into national preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. The Annual Report describes the work of the ICC and its members from August 2008 to December 2009, including response to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike and the H1N1 Pandemic; ICC members' significant role in the 2009 National Conference on Community Preparedness; and the vital contributions of ICC member agencies in the development of an inclusive *National Disaster Recovery Framework*. Click here to read the Report.

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Complaints Process Improved

Over the past six months, CRCL has consulted a wide range of stakeholders and are now bringing to a close a major review of our complaints process, with many resulting improvements. Highlights include:

- *Complaints Database.* Our new complaints database, launched in October 2010, improves confidentiality protections and record keeping; its tracking and reporting functions will assist trend analysis.
- *Expedited Complaint Processing.* We have created a "short form" complaint process to facilitate immediate responses to address urgent complaints, using less formal channels of investigation.
- *Increased Transparency.* We now tell complainants and the public more about complaints results.
- *Online Complaint Form.* Our new (optional) easy-to-use, online complaint form can be accessed on our webpage, downloaded, and submitted via email. It will soon be posted in many languages.
- *Language Access*. We have greatly improved our ability to accept complaints and interview complainants and witnesses in non-English languages, entering new contracts for on-demand interpretation services.
- *Complaint Follow-up.* We have improved follow-up on recommendations that result from our complaint investigations.
- *Expert consultants*. We have doubled our access to subject matter experts, who assist us with matters ranging from medical and mental health care to use of force.
- *Confidentiality*. We are working with DHS component agencies to ensure complainant confidentiality and protections against reprisal.

Universal Periodic Review, before the UN Human Rights Council

In November, CRCL's Officer Margo Schlanger traveled to Geneva, Switzerland as part of a senior delegation to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, which presented the U.S. report on the nation's human rights record.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process for assessment of the human rights record of each of the UN's 192 Member States. This is the United States' first UPR. The U.S. report covers a range of issues including protections against race and ethnicity discrimination, immigration conditions, freedom of speech, association, and belief, and civil liberties in the context of national security. Click here to read it.

The U.S. delegation included senior representatives from the Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security, among other agencies. The photo, above, captures the delegation, including Officer Schlanger, participating in a major town hall meeting with U.S. and international non-governmental organization leaders.

Human Rights Day, December 10

Respect for human rights and human dignity "is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." *– The UN General Assembly, 1948.*

SPEAK UP STOP DISCRIMINATION
HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2010

December 10th marks the anniversary of the UN Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Human Rights Day recognizes the work of human rights defenders worldwide who act to end discrimination by campaigning for equitable and effective laws, reporting and investigating human rights violations and supporting victims. For more information, click here.

As the DHS "single contact officer" with responsibility for coordinating Departmental implementation of human rights treaties under Executive Order 13107, CRCL works to further the United States' commitment to respecting and protecting human rights.

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CRCL Expands Community Outreach Roundtables

One of CRCL's many responsibilities includes engaging with diverse communities across the country whose civil rights and civil liberties may be affected by DHS activities. Our Community Engagement Section leads regular roundtable meetings across the country with community leaders to communicate reliable information about federal programs and policies, including avenues for redress and complaints; to obtain feedback about community concerns and on-the-ground impacts of DHS activities, in order to incorporate into the policymaking process community ideas and issues relating to civil rights and civil liberties; and to deepen channels of communication between communities and federal officials in order to facilitate solution of problems.

CRCL has expanded its regular roundtables to nine cities: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Columbus (OH), Detroit, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Washington, DC. The Community Engagement section has also held specially coordinated engagement events in: Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Fremont (CA), Houston, Kingston (RI), New York, Portland (OR), Raleigh, San Diego, and Tampa (FL).

CRCL Leadership

CRCL's leadership team combines many years of civil rights and civil liberties expertise and commitment with experience prosecuting civil rights crimes, investigating employee misconduct, adjudicating equal employment disputes, reforming detention facilities, and shaping policy that protects civil rights and civil liberties. Meet some of CRCL's leaders below.

Margo Schlanger, DHS Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
Margo Schlanger was appointed by President Obama to lead the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, and joined the Department in January 2010. Prior to her appointment, she was a law professor, most recently at the University of Michigan. Ms. Schlanger had previously been a trial attorney at the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, where she worked to remedy civil rights abuses by prison and police departments.

Tamara Kessler, Deputy Officer for Programs and Compliance
Tamara Kessler is our new Deputy for the Programs and Compliance Division. Ms. Kessler spent the last 20 years at the Department of Justice, first as an Assistant US Attorney in Philadelphia, then as a civil rights prosecutor, and finally conducting internal investigations for the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of Professional Responsibility.

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Robert Abraham, Acting Deputy Officer for Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity
Robert Abraham has joined CRCL as the Acting Deputy Officer for EEO and Diversity, on a detail from the Department of Justice. Mr. Abraham received his undergraduate degree from University of Michigan, his law degree from Wayne State University, and a Masters in Labor Law from Georgetown University. For the last 15 years, he has served as the Supervisory Attorney with the Justice Department's Complaint Adjudication Office, which deals with EEO matters.

David Gersten, Programs Branch Director
David Gersten is the Director of CRCL's Programs Branch. Before joining DHS, Mr. Gersten led customer service efforts for the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. Before then, he served as executive director of the Center for Equal Opportunity, providing assistance for the public and private sector on immigration and assimilation policy making. Mr. Gersten also spent four years as director of education for an educational foundation dedicated to identifying, training, and placing young people in public policy positions.

Jeff Blumberg, Compliance Branch Director
Jeff Blumberg is the new Director of the Compliance Branch. He comes to us from the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, where he was a Special Litigation Counsel in the Criminal Section. During his seven years at the Department of Justice, he prosecuted numerous high profile civil rights cases around the country and was awarded the Attorney General's Award for Exceptional Service in 2009. Before that, he was an Assistant Public Defender in Montgomery County, Maryland for six years. Mr. Blumberg also served as an Army JAG for four years. He is an Adjunct Professor at Washington College of Law, American University.

Chrystal Young, Director for Complaints Management and Adjudication
Chrystal Young joined CRCL in May 2006, and has been in her current position as Director for Complaints Management and Adjudication since March 2008. Ms. Young administers the DHS-wide EEO complaints program and manages the adjudication of EEO complaints that have arisen in component organizations throughout DHS. Ms. Young has worked in the Equal Employment Opportunity field for the past 20 years with various federal agencies and has been with DHS since its inception in 2003.

Carl Sublett, Executive Officer
Carl Sublett is CRCL's new Executive Officer. Mr. Sublett is a retired military officer with over 30 years of experience in areas such as operations, training, human resources, equal opportunity policy/training, recruiting, directing organizational functions, and program/personnel management. At DHS, Mr. Sublett has worked at CBP as an advisor to executive management on major mission programs, especially acquisition oversight, guidance, coordination, and customer support. He has also focused on performance management improvement processes and implementation.

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Additional information, and contacting us

The goal of this periodic newsletter is to inform members of the public about the activities of the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, including how to make complaints; ongoing and upcoming projects; opportunities to offer comments and feedback; etc. We distribute our newsletters via an email list and make them available to community groups for redistribution. If would like to receive this newsletter via email, want to request back issues, or have other comments or questions, please let us know by emailing crcloutreach@dhs.gov. If you are on this list, but no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please send an email to the same address asking us to unsubscribe you. For more information, including on how to make a civil rights or civil liberties complaint about DHS activities, see www.dhs.gov/crcl.

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Prior newsletters:

Issue 1 (Sept. 2010) Civil Rights Complaints • Anti-Discrimination Obligations for Recipients of DHS Financial Support • Expanded Community Engagement

Issue 2 (Oct. 2010) CRCL Leads Presentation on Children • Guidance to Travelers Carrying Religious Articles• New Environmental Justice Group • DHS and Hispanic Heritage Month • ITACG Impact Assessment Completed

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